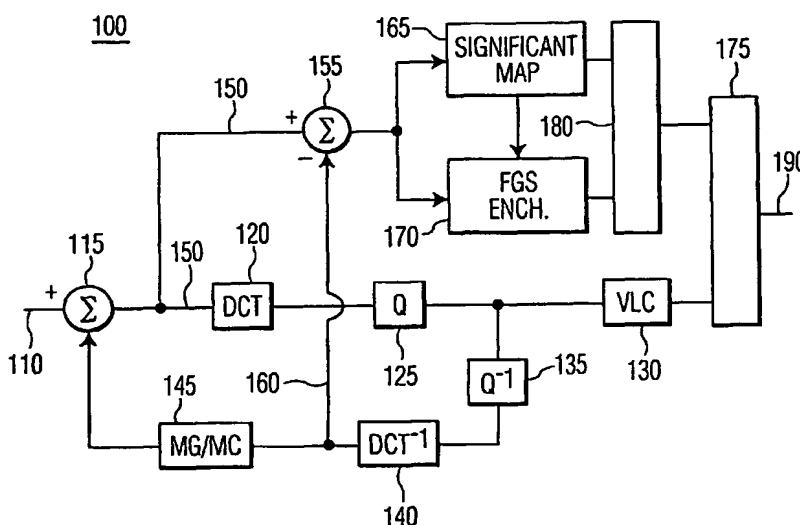




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(54) Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR ENCODING FRACTIONAL BITPLANES



(57) Abstract: In a layered encoding system having at least one layer comprising a plurality of sub-layers (272, 274, 276), a method is disclosed herein for encoding a video image (200) composed of a plurality of pixel blocks containing at least one area determined to be significant (200, 215, 220) within a corresponding sub-layer (272, 274, 276). The method comprises the steps of; associating a level of significance with each block (250, 252) of a known size within the at least one significant area (200), associating a level of significance with successively larger blocks (222, 244) dependent upon the level of significance of at least one of the blocks (250, 252) of a known size contained within said larger block (222, 244), and mapping each of the associated levels of significance. In another embodiment of the invention, the significance map is transmitted and corresponding image layers may be reconstructed using the significance map.